

Growth Management Plan Update

Draft Public Participation Plan Columbia County

April 11, 2004

DRAFT

Columbia County Growth Management Plan Update 2025

Community Participation Plan

Public involvement is an essential element to the successful development and implementation of every major planning effort. The Community Participation Plan for Columbia County recognizes the need to clearly communicate with community leaders, citizens, neighborhoods, business and property owners as well as elected and appointed officials in order to identify issues, goals and objectives. This plan establishes several communication outlets to inform citizens of the process and solicit participation. The visioning process will be brought to the community with the intent to rotate community workshops and Open House sites through various locations within the County. Designed as a dynamic plan, the program presented provides the opportunity for the community to address concerns that emerge during the plan update and build consensus throughout the planning process.

The primary objective of the Community Participation Plan is to obtain broad community input and to involve community stakeholders to the greatest extent possible in planning, decision making and implementation processes. Equally important, this plan seeks to obtain input from other, less obvious community stakeholders, such as; the local faith community, minority and elderly citizens. This approach provides clarity in regards to the needs and priorities of a broad range of residents, stakeholders and property owners, as well as the expectations and requirements of future investors and government agencies that regulate and fund public services.

The public involvement process for Columbia County incorporates several methods of public engagement to ensure that the final goals and implementation strategies of the plan are derived from local perspectives. The overall community participation program will involve a comprehensive effort including: a steering committee, stakeholder interviews, visioning workshops, and open house sessions. This program will determine key issues and opportunities, and formulate and refine ideas and goals. A summary of these key components is presented below.

Stakeholder Identification

Document County selection process

Public Participation Techniques

- **Steering Committee**
 - Thirty-member committee appointed by the County Commission that will serve as the champions of the plan update. This group will discuss and provide input on the planning issues.
 - This committee will meet on a monthly basis throughout the planning process.
- **Stakeholder Interviews**
 - Interviews will be conducted with representatives from all major stakeholder groups within the County.

- Community Workshops
 - As part of building the Community Agenda, community workshops will be held throughout Columbia County where broader community input will be solicited.
 - These workshops will include a review of the Community Assessment prior to submittal to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).
- Open House
 - Two Open Houses will be conducted where the draft plan will be reviewed by the community prior to submittal to County Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.
- Public Hearing
 - The final plan will be presented to the County Commission for certification and transmittal to DCA.
- Public Notices and Updates
 - Each of the public workshops and public hearings will be properly advertised in the local Columbia County newspaper the Columbia County News-Times. Information updates will also be posted on the County website: <http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/home/index.asp?page=2976>

Steering Committee

A steering committee has been established to help guide the planning process for the Growth Management Plan Update. The steering committee will play an important role in obtaining insight to current community issues and will serve as a sounding board as proposals for the plan are advanced. The selection of a diverse group of stakeholders, representing different community perspectives was an important factor in establishing the steering committee.

Table 1 presents the steering committee members appointed by the Columbia County Commission for this planning effort.

Table 1
Columbia County Growth Management Plan Steering Committee Members

Name	Stakeholder Group
Julie Batchelor	Homeowner/Neighborhood Representative
Gary Best	Homeowner/Neighborhood Representative
Regina Buccafusco	Board of Education
Ed Cavaleri	Retirement community
Bobby Culpepper	City of Harlem; Business owner
Zack Daffin	Development Authority
Ed Dickerson	Engineer/Planner; Development Interests
Mike Evitts	Manufacturers Council
Jean Garniewicz	Homeowner/Neighborhood Representative

Table 1 cont.	
Name	Stakeholder Group
Pat Goodwin	Business representative
Louanne Grove	Board of Education
Jake Ivey	Home builder
Greg Kernaghan	Business representative
Sandra Lewis	Board of Education
Steve Morris	Sheriffs Department
Bob Newkirk	Planning Commission, retired
Oliver Owens	Developer, residential and industrial
Mike Popplewell	Agriculture and forestry
Tommy Price	Board of Education
Gordon Renshaw	Chamber of Commerce
Mike Rorick	Engineer, solid waste
Mark Senn	Commercial builder/developer
Charles Sharpe	Business owner
Tom Sprague	Planning Commissioner
Joe Tankersley	Engineer, planner; private engineering firm
Pam Tankersley	Banking industry
Ron Thigpen	Planning Commission Chair, banking industry
Don Thornhill	City of Grovetown
Denis Vining	Homeowner/Neighborhood Representative
Jeri Whitworth	Homeowner/Neighborhood Representative
Ye Sun Wiltse	Homeowner/Neighborhood Representative
Dennis Ziegler	Industry; Business Owner

Stakeholder Interviews

All community stakeholders will be encouraged to actively participate in all of the planning processes and activities. However, it is recognized that it is not always practical for interested citizens to attend scheduled community meetings and workshops due to their work schedules, business operation hours, etc. Stakeholder interviews will be conducted as a means of capturing additional community input.

Stakeholder interviews provide an opportunity to obtain extensive input from key stakeholders without time constraints. The interviews will be conducted in an atmosphere conducive to the open discussion of sensitive issues. As noted, the interviews provide an opportunity for individuals that are unable to attend meetings or community workshops to have input into the process. The one on one interviews also provide an opportunity for those stakeholders that are reluctant to speak in public forums to voice their opinions in a less intimidating atmosphere than formal community meetings. The information obtained in the interviews provide anecdotal, yet relevant information related to community livability conditions and stakeholder priorities. The interviews also provide invaluable background information related to cultural, economic,

social, and political factors that might impact current and future planning efforts in Columbia County.

The interviews will be conducted during the Community Assessment phase of the planning effort. Input obtained during the interviews will be used as part of the identification of Issues and Opportunities and will be factored into the final conclusions and recommendations along with other stakeholder input obtained during community works shops and the independent research and analysis conducted by the consultant team. However, additional interviews will likely occur informally during public presentations throughout the planning process.

Focus Groups

Focus group meetings may be conducted if issues emerge that require more in-depth community input. Focus group meetings will be conducted with constituency groups that would be potentially impacted by changes in the area. The meetings will provide an opportunity for each of the groups to provide extensive input based upon their unique perspectives. The plan provides for up to two focus group meetings that would be conducted in lieu of a steering committee meeting.

Community Workshops

Given the size of Columbia County and the diverse issues the plan provides for three Community Workshops conducted in different geographic areas of the County. These evening sessions will occur in the following areas. Specific locations will be announced at a later date.

1. City of Evans
2. Appling – the County seat
3. City of Grovetown

Steering Committee members will take an active role in leading the community work shops. The workshops are designed to: 1) present findings from the community assessment; 2) assess current impressions of the County; 3) identify issues and opportunities.

These workshops will engage the citizens in a series of exercises and dialogue designed to identify what they consider to be the key issues and opportunities facing Columbia County. In addition, educational information designed to increase the stakeholders understanding of community planning process will be presented.

The workshop activities will include:

1. A presentation of highlights from the Community Assessment to set the stage for further discussion and vision building.
2. Breakout sessions where small groups of citizens participate in brainstorming regarding Issues and Opportunities that exist in the County.
3. Open group discussions where the citizens are encouraged to ask questions and offer comments related to both the process and issues related to improving livability conditions in the area.

These sessions are designed to obtain more focused and specific stakeholder input regarding issues and opportunities and how they will influence livability conditions

throughout County. All of these activities will be centered around the later development of community goals and implementation strategies.

Documentation of the Vision and Planning Principles

Based upon the results from the Community Work Shops and Focus Groups, the planning team will begin to document and summarize the potential character areas and development principles for each area. The results of the community input and analysis provides direction for each area that emerged during the analysis. The draft design and development principles will address issues including land use, circulation, physical constraints, infrastructure, public services and open space. These principles will serve to establish a direction of the implementation strategies for the plan. A draft report documenting and illustrating the diverse ideas, the vision and goals will be prepared and presented to the community during two open houses.

Open Houses

Open Houses will be conducted as public forums for citizens to provide comments and on the draft plan update. The Open Houses are informal settings where the public can move about various stations to gain information regarding the community's input to date. The Planning team will coordinate with the County to determine the ideal locations to rotate the Open Houses. We propose a total of 2 concurrent Open Houses where the draft plan is presented for public comment.

Planning Team Coordination

The team will organize and schedule the meetings with consultation from the Steering Committee, arrange for the meeting sites, prepare and distribute notification letters, provide an agenda and sign-in sheets, and present presentation materials at the meeting. Response cards will be made available at all public meetings. The team will respond to public comments and questions, and will prepare and distribute meeting minutes, keeping accurate records of all proceedings. In addition, meeting and plan updates will be posted to the County website.

The public involvement program will be continuous so that the public can stay involved, provide input at key milestones and monitor the progress of the project. The proposed schedule for community participation is presented below.

Proposed Schedule

Community Participation Schedule

Task	March			April			May			June			July			Aug			Sept			Oct		
Involvement/Coordination																								
Planning Team Coordination																								
Steering Committee																								
Stakeholder Interviews																								
Public Work Sessions (3)																								
City of Evans Session																								
Appling Session																								
Grovetown/Harlem Session																								
Optional Focus Groups																								
Open Houses																								
Website Updates																								
County Commission Hearing																								
Plan Adoption																								